

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DHA-02 AID-05 /064 W
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R 161336Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5439
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 11552

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IN
SUBJECT: R.K. DHAWAN AND OTHER ASSOCIATES OF MRS. GANDHI ARRESTED

REF: NEW DELHI A-150

1. R.K. DHAWAN, FORMER ADDITIONAL PRIVATE SECRETARY TO MRS. GANDHI, WAS AMONG 10 PERSONS ARRESTED AUGUST 15 BY OFFICERS OF THE CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. OTHERS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY INCLUDED: P.C. SETHI, FORMER MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS AND ONE-TIME MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER AND CONGRESS TREASURER; YASHPAL KAPUR, FORMER PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO MRS. GANDHI; AND N. K. SINGH, FORMER SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO EX-COMMERCE MINISTER CHATTOPADHYAYA. THE ARRESTS FOLLOWED SEARCHES OF THEIR RESIDENCES WHICH REPORTEDLY TURNED UP LARGE QUANTITIES
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OF INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS. ALL WERE CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY TO MISUSE THEIR OFFICIAL POSITIONS, CORRUPTION AND ACCUMULATION OF UNACCOUNTED WEALTH. SETHI, WHOSE DECLINING HEALTH AND INCREASINGLY ERRATIC BEHAVIOR HAD IMPELLED MRS. GANDHI TO REMOVE HIM FROM THE CHEMICALS PORTFOLIO LAST FALL, REPORTEDLY FELL ILL WHEN THE CBI OFFICERS ARRIVED AND WAS GRANTED BAIL SO THAT HE COULD BE HOSPITALIZED.

2. COMMENT: DHAWAN AND KAPUR WERE VERY CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH MRS. GANDHI AND HER SON, SANJAY, AND WERE PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED "CAUCUS" AROUND THE EX-PM DURING THE EMERGENCY. THEIR ARREST IS VIEWED HERE AS JUST THE FIRST INSTALLMENT IN A SERIES OF SWEEPS TO ROUND UP MRS. GANDHI'S AIDES AND EVEN CABINET COLLEAGUES WHO WERE ALLEGED CULPRITS IN THE "MISDEEDS" OF HER GOVT. SPECULATION HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE CBI RAIDS ON HIS HOUSES (REPAIR), THAT FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER BANSI LAL WILL BE PICKED UP SHORTLY. THE ARRESTS ARE LIKELY TO RELIEVE PRESSURE SOMEWHAT ON THE JANATA GOVT TO BE MORE AGGRESSIVE IN PURSUING THE "CRIMINALS" OF THE EMERGENCY, AND TO DEFUSE GROWING CHARGES THAT HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH WAS DELIBERATELY SLOWING UP OFFICIAL INQUIRIES INTO THE ABUSES OF POWER DURING MRS. GANDHI'S RULE. THEY ARE ALSO LIKELY TO SERVE AS A REMINDER TO SANJAY, BANSI LAL AND OTHER CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF THE FORMER PM THAT THE NEW GOVT IS INTENT ON CLOSING THE NET AROUND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "MISDEEDS" OF THE EMERGENCY. IN ADDITION, THESE ARRESTS REPRESENT A BLOW TO MRS. GANDHI'S DETERMINED COMEBACK EFFORTS, SINCE THEY SERVE TO KEEP ALIVE PUBLIC MEMORIES OF THE PAST, AND WILL PRESUMABLY BE USED AS AMMUNITION AGAINST HER BY HER OPPONENTS WITHIN THE CONGRESS GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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